

DENTAL & ORAL CAVITY

TOOTHACHE

I. Definition

A toothache is any pain or soreness within or around a tooth that usually indicates inflammation and possible infection.

II. Etiology

The most common causes of toothaches are dental caries, pulpitis, periapical abscess, trauma, and eruption of a wisdom tooth.

III. Clinical Features

- A. Sharp, throbbing, or constant pain.
- B. Tooth pain that only occurs when pressure is applied.
- C. Swelling, painful gums.
- D. Bad taste in the mouth (from an infection in a tooth).
- E. Fever or headache.

IV. Assessment

- A. Obtain history of the dental pain with description, onset, duration, and location of pain.
- B. Date of last dental exam and treatment.
- C. Recent trauma to area of pain.
- D. Any noted restriction of jaw movement.
- E. Oral cavity assessment (note any facial swelling, bleeding, discharge and/or foul smell) or trismus (difficulty opening mouth).
- F. Obtain vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure).

V. Differential Diagnosis

- A. Muscle pain
- B. Headache
- C. Trigeminal Neuralgia
- D. Nerve damage pain
- E. Heart attack
- F. Sinus pain
- G. Tumors
- H. Salivary gland dysfunction

VI. Plan

A. Nursing Interventions

- 1. Provide OTC pain medication (see below) as initial treatment for pain.
- 2. Scan Health Service Request Form to the dental department.
- 3. Call Dental clinic for all patients experiencing severe pain with notification that form was scanned.
- 4. *All patients will be provided with a green health service request form (specific to dental). This form can be used by the patient for any subsequent request for services and will indicate to the staff that the patient is continuing to have dental pain or problems. **Form must have patient name and DOC number pre-written by nursing personnel prior to providing to patient.**
- 5. Subsequent health service request forms will be treated by nursing as a new request and must result in a scheduled face to face visit or well-being check.

B. Patient Education

- 1. Avoid extreme hot or cold substances.
- 2. Use medication as instructed.
- 3. Instruct to report if condition worsens, especially with symptoms of facial swelling or trismus.

4. Dental clinic will be notified of request and if not seen by dental within 10 days, someone from dental will come to tier to conduct well-being check.

C. Referral and Follow-Up Appointments

1. Patient should be given an Urgent (same day) referral if they present with:
 - a. Abnormal vital signs or signs and symptoms of infection or swelling to face or trismus.
2. Confer with Provider if mechanism of injury suggesting trauma, fractures, or limited range of motion.

OTC Medications available per nursing guidelines:

- KOP Acetaminophen 500 mg tablet by mouth every 8 hours as needed except for patients with advanced liver disease (only 1-2 tablets every 24 hours). Give 24 tablets total (1 bottle) plus six additional tablets or 3 packets (total 10 day treatment). Do not repeat for 3 days, may repeat x1. Instruct patient not to take for than 6 tablets in a 24-hour time frame.
- Dose by dose Acetaminophen 500 mg tablet by mouth. Give one tablet now and one tablet to take in 8 hours. Give 2 tablets total or 1 packet.
- KOP Ibuprofen 200 mg by mouth every 8 hours as needed except for advanced liver disease, chronic kidney disease, pregnancy, congestive heart failure, allergic to NSAIDS/aspirin, peptic ulcer disease, GI bleeding or other bleeding disorders; taking blood thinners. Give 24 tablets total (1 bottle) plus six additional tablets or 3 packet (total 10 day treatment). Do not repeat for 6 days, may repeat x1. Take only with food.
- Dose by dose Ibuprofen 200 mg by mouth. Give 1 tablet now and 1 tablet to take in 8 hours. Given 2 tablets total (1 packet). Restrictions same as KOP.

Recommended ESI level 5 unless signs of infection present.

Recommended nursing diagnoses:

- Risk for infection
- Readiness for enhanced nutrition

The Toothache guideline requires the nurse to assess:

- Vital Signs
- Oral Exam

Please note: Green forms are only to be kept in the dispensary and only to be given after initial face to face visit and are for secondary dental health service requests.